

FINAL

FILE
COPYUnited States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See Instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Paramount Theater Building
other names/site number Paramount Centre, 095-015-46071

2. Location

street & number 1124 Meridian Street N ☒ not for publication
city, town Anderson N ☒ vicinity
state Indiana code IN county Madison code 095 zip code 46016

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/ANumber of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture-theaterRecreation and Culture-music facilityCommerce/Trade-specialty store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture-theaterRecreation and Culture-music facilitySocial-Meeting Hall**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Spanish Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concretewalls BrickTerra Cottaroof Asphaltother Metal: AluminumGlass

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

☒ See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance

1929-1941

Significant Dates

1929

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Strauss, Alvin M.

Eberson, John

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Ahrens, Henry, "Some Structural Features of Theaters," Architectural Forum, June, 1925, 407.
- Alexander, Mike, "Paramount to Reopen," Anderson Herald, June 9, 1986, 1.
- Brockmyer, Phylis, "A.M. Strauss and Strauss Associates, Inc.," College of Architecture and Planning Archives, Ball State University, or Indiana State Archives, 1989.
- Bullock, E.C.A., "Theater Entrances and Lobbies," Architectural Forum, 1925, 369.
- Crane, Howard C., "Observations on Motion Picture Theaters," Architectural Forum, June, 1925, 381.

☒ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other
- Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A 1 6 6 1 2 6 0 0 4 4 3 9 9 8 0
Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
Zone Easting Northing

D _____

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot number 16 in Fletcher and Williams First Addition to the South Front of the City of Anderson, Madison County, Indiana, that Plat of which is recorded in Plat Book 1, Page 2 in the office of the Recorder of Madison County, Indiana.

☒ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This is the historic property boundary.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James Robert Abraham, Project Manager/Indiana Hist. Pres. & Archaeo.

organization Paramount Heritage Foundation date 1/30/91

street & number 1124 Meridian Street, P.O. Box 727 telephone 317/642-1234 - 317/232-16

city or town Anderson state Indiana zip code 46015

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NOTE: Much of the description, statement of significance, and bibliography are taken in large part from an Historic Structure Report by L. Ann Walker, Nancy Turner, Alison Oswald, and Cindi Gonzales, Architecture, Atmosphere, and Entertainment: A Study of the Paramount Theatre Building, Anderson, Indiana. Muncie, IN: College of Architecture and Planning, Ball State University, April 1, 1990.

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The Paramount Theater Building is located at 1120-1134 Meridian Street in the central business district of Anderson, Madison County, Indiana. It was built in 1929, and is an example of a movie palace combined with retail and office space. The Paramount was constructed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, and retains most of its original architectural integrity. The few exterior alterations that have occurred are largely superficial.

Located at the northeast corner of the intersection of 12th Street and Meridian Plaza, the Paramount Theater Building occupies approximately 3/4 of the south half of the block. Meridian Plaza slopes downhill toward 12th Street where it becomes level. The building site follows this slope. The auditorium is the largest component of the building's mass, and is aligned along the north boundary of the site. A smaller three story rectangle containing the theater entrance, adjacent shops, and second and third floor office space, is located in front of the auditorium. Located to the south of the auditorium and theater lobby sections is a three story rectangular commercial block containing retail and office space. A narrow fire proof theater exit court is located to the east of this section.

These various components of the building are visually unified by sharing the elaborate Spanish Colonial Revival detailing. The building at its longest east-west point, from the theater entrance to the rear of the auditorium, is approximately 170'. The west facade of the building is approximately 144' north to south.

The building has poured, reinforced concrete footings and foundation that support the main steel structure. The walls of the north and east elevations are of common brick. The walls of the west and south elevations are finished with a buff colored face brick. Darker buff face brick and cream colored terra cotta are used as decorative accents for these two elevations.

The auditorium section and commercial block have gambrel composite roofs on a steel deck. The roofing system is composed of steel trusses. The stage roof rises an additional 8 feet at the east end of the auditorium and is crowned by a large ventilator, essential for drawing off the heat generated during theater productions (photo 4). The projection booth is housed in a separate rectangular block that sits on the roof of the theater

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entrance section. The portions of the auditorium roof and projection booth visible from the street are also covered with the buff faced brick.

The west and south facades of the Paramount Theater building carry the primary architectural emphasis of the exterior of the structure (photos 1, 2, and 3). Unifying elements of the facade are; a continuous entablature above the store fronts, a cornice above the third floor windows, terra cotta coping along the parapet, decorative brick work, and ornate window surrounds. The building's upper floors feature six pavilions with curvilinear parapets and ornate terra cotta window surrounds. Dark buff header bricks are used to create diamond diaper work and terra cotta is used for the coping.

Five pavilions have paired windows on the second and third floors. Header brick in a dark buff frames the second floor windows. These windows are one-over-one double hung with wood sash. The third floor windows are each framed with an ornate terra cotta aedicule (photo 5). The Renaissance style aedicule have floral inscribed pilasters, an enriched entablature and a curvilinear pediment with a putti's head. On the west facade the space between the paired windows is filled with smooth terra cotta block. A terra cotta tracery panel is located under each window. Pilasters on either side of the panels support the terra cotta window sills. The windows are 12/1 double hung with wood sash. Above the third floor windows, the surface of the pavilion parapet is decorated with diamond diaperwork in dark buff header brick. A terra cotta grill in the shape of a quatrefoil is centered over the windows. Engaged terra cotta colonettes with chevron incised shafts are topped with decorative finial. These colonettes mark the perimeter of each pavilion.

The sixth pavilion, above the theater entrance, is wider and has a taller parapet than the other five. Small reverse scroll brackets are located on each side of the curvilinear parapet. The wall surface of the parapet has diamond diaperwork in dark buff header brick. The diaperwork is smaller than the other pavilions and has terra cotta lozenges at the center of each diamond. The two third floor windows have a terra cotta decorative treatment identical to the windows mentioned above except they are not paired. The windows are located at the outer edges of the pavilion and each

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one is framed between two terra cotta colonettes connected by a curvilinear coping of terra cotta. A quatrefoil grill of terra cotta is centered above each window. The original electric Paramount sign was located between these two framing elements and rose above the parapet. The vertical sign was an integral element of the theater facade and was accentuated by the decorative treatment of the pavilion. The second floor windows are vertically aligned with the third floor windows, and are identical to the second floor windows of the other pavilions.

The pavilions are separated by less ornate rectangular four bay sections. Three of these sections on the west facade and two sections on the south facade are of equal size. A narrow one bay section is located at the east end of the south facade, containing the theater exit court. The parapet of each four bay section is decorated with diamond diaperwork in a dark header brick, in the manner of the pavilion parapets. An elongated terra cotta quatrefoil is centered in the parapet above each third floor window.

The area under the parapet features brick pilasters outlined in the dark header brick. The pilasters span the second and third floors and separate four sets of windows that are vertically paired. The windows are one-over-one double hung with wood sash and terra cotta sills. Brick, laid in a basket weave pattern, fills the space between the two windows and is ornamented with a round terra cotta medallion.

Unlike the upper level, with its rich ornament, the street level of the Paramount Theater building reflects characteristics of relatively simple 1920s storefront design. The focus of the first story is the marquee and theater entrance (photo 6). Although the theater entrance has been altered, it represents a later interpretation of the design goal of the original entrance. The goal was to suggest movement and excitement that would draw the public into the theater. The original rectangular marquee overhung the sidewalk. A short awning hung from the edge of the marquee. The sides and face of the marquee had sign boards trimmed with lights. Above the sign boards, curvilinear pediments with palmettes contained "P" monograms. The present marquee, added in 1947, is wider than the original and hides the terra cotta faced clerestory of the theater entrance. The Art Moderne

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lines of the marquee, with its yellow lettering on an orange ground, present a strong contrast to the building's more classically derived exterior elements.

The entrance originally featured decoratively shaped, glazed wooden doors set in wood frames with transoms. The 1947 remodeling replaced these doors with two sets of three triple-plate glass doors set in aluminum frames. The size of the original opening was reduced but the transoms remain. The ticket booth was also replaced in 1947 by an Art Moderne booth. It has a round base and roof faced with highly polished aluminum. The ticket window has beveled glass to match the curve of the booth. It is located between the two sets of doors. The original wooden ticket booth was located in the same location, but was square in plan and sat on a granite base. It had a terra cotta panel under the ticket window and rich detailing with three curvilinear pediments.

Despite the 1947 remodeling, many original elements of the theater entrance are intact. The wide entrance opening is framed by piers paneled with terra cotta. These piers have granite bases. The original threshold is of Tennessee marble in shades of pink and green set in a geometric pattern. The original attraction boards were located on the terra cotta piers at each side of the entrance. They were framed by ornate columns that supported an enriched curvilinear pediment in a Renaissance style.

In addition to the large theater entrance on the west, the building's original plans indicated thirteen display window openings on the south and west facades, with one opening devoted to the entrance to the second and third floor spaces. A small space at the east side of the south facade was for the fire exit court. The theater entrance was flanked by two storefront openings to the north and the upper floor entrance on the south. The remaining storefronts filled the balance of the west and south facades.

The original store front facades are faced with Carrara glass, but no two use the same color or shade. All the entrances have terrazzo sills and are recessed, but at unequal depths. No two entrances are of the same height and doors are both centered and off-center. Display windows were capped with transoms. The openings are separated by granite-based brick piers. A single

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terra cotta decorative brick is inset at the top of each pier. A continuous entablature is located above the sotre fronts on the west and south facades. The entablature is comprised of a simple terra cotta architrave, a frieze with brick laid in a basket weave pattern, and an enriched terra cotta cornice.

The interior commercial spaces of the Paramount building are quite functional in comparison with the theater interior. An open steel stair provides access to the basement and the upper floors. Floors, stair treads, and stair landings are terrazzo. The office spaces on the second and third floors have smooth plaster walls, hardwood floors, and various partitioned offices. The wood trim and wood office partitions have a dark finish. The south section of the third floor is one large unpartitioned space. This space has served as a ballroom in the past.

The Paramount Theater interior exhibits many of the characteristics associated with a 1920s movie palace. Its large single balcony auditorium, designed to accomodate both movies and vaudeville, seated approximately 1,700 patrons. The thematic decor of the theater was designed to transport the theater patron to distant and exotic places. As an atmospheric theater, the Paramount gave the patron not only a show, but a total experience. The atmospheric effects were designed to create the illusion that the auditorium was actually a beautiful walled Spanish Garden.

The Paramount interior is rich with Spanish-influenced details. Heavy piers, barrel vaults, and exposed timbers imitate the structural systems of Spanish domestic architecture. All the theater walls are finished in a heavy textured plaster, simulating stucco. Cartouches, heraldic shields, and tapestries were used to adorn the walls. Rustic lanterns, wall sconces, torches, and chandeliers provided subdued illumination. The Paramount was originally furnished with antiques imported from Europe. Spanish architectural details include: curvilinear arches and pediments; spiral columns; patterned tiles; Plateresque and arabesque surfaces; decorative grills; Corinthian capitals; and Renaissance entablatures and pediments. The use of statues placed in niches was characteristic of the Baroque era.

Upon buying a ticket, the theater patron passed through a small ticket lobby with an elaborate ceiling (photos 7 and 8). The

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ceiling features moulded plaster, simulating wooden beams, with the space between coffered. The patron then entered the theater lobby, which features an intricate tile floor with two prominent designs. A Renaissance palace and a heraldic shield are formed by the various colored tiles of rust, deep brown, azure blue, gold, green, terra cotta, and white (photo 10). The theater lobby ceiling is coffered with a pattern of octagons separated by small squares. A rich arabesque pattern decorates the coffers. The ceiling perimeter has an ornate plaster cornice. The theater lobby has openings onto the orchestra foyer and the stairways leading to the mezzanine promenade.

The foyer extends from north to south at the rear of the orchestra level and has a slight curve. It has a barrel vaulted ceiling and engaged columns with lattice patterns in the shafts and Corinthian capitals (photo 11). Wood glazed doors open into the auditorium. A concession stand has been added in the foyer center. The mezzanine promenade was a spacious and plush area designed for the comfort of patrons. It has a rectangular plan with a barrel vaulted ceiling. Curvilinear arches spring from engaged piers along the balcony wall. Two arched doorways lead to the balcony. The opposite wall opens into an arcaded offset. Cast plaster shields decorate the piers and the barrel vault is outlined by an ornate cornice. This area was once furnished with plush carpeting, antiques, and tapestry covered walls. The mens' and ladies' lounges were located in this area. Both lounges originally had iron gates at the door openings. A curtained door leads from the promenade to the manager's office, the usher's room, and the janitor's room.

The theater patrons pass from the interior passageways of the foyer and mezzanine into the beautiful garden of the "atmospheric" auditorium. The auditorium was intended to resemble an amphitheater set in a Spanish patio (photo 12). The walls are still lined with Spanish facades and garden walls, but once tapestries hung from balconies artificial plants covered the garden walls, birds flew overhead, and clouds drifted across the night sky while stars twinkled in the heavens.

The north and south walls of the auditorium are identical. Each is lined with three Spanish building facades (photo 13). The first facade at the east end near the stage, has a tall

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curvilinear parapet. The second pavilion has a lower roof line with a curvilinear gable projecting from a Spanish tile roof. The third pavilion recreates a Renaissance tower and contains the balcony exit. The six pavilions are rich with architectural detail including; screens, colonettes, balconies, balconettes, arcades, niches, columns, pilasters, and entablatures. Statuary fills many of the niches (photo 17). Coping outlines the pavilions and garden walls. The building facades, as well as the other walls of the auditorium and the balcony, are enriched with other ornamentation. The balcony soffit is highly enriched with a pattern of quatrefoils. The orchestra pit in front of the stage is surrounded by a balustrade. The original organ sits on a lift platform in the orchestra pit (photo 18).

The elliptical semi-dome ceiling is covered with smooth plaster and extends behind the false facades to the sidewalls. It is painted a deep blue to simulate the night sky and it has twinkling lights that simulate the stars and constellations. A ten foot wide trellis, complete with vines, spans the ceiling above the orchestra pit. Originally, the Paramount had four cloud machines, one in each corner of the auditorium. Using a projector with a rotating lens, the cloud machine projected images of clouds on the ceiling that appeared to move across the night sky.

The proscenium arch is framed by two large composite piers with engaged columns that have candelabrum-ornamented shafts (photo 14). The columns have Corinthian capitals that support a Renaissance entablature. The frieze area of the entablature is composed of semi-circular niches with a shell motif. A parapet above the entablature is composed of a foliated balustrade that hides a maintenance walkway. The proscenium opening is 28' high and 40' wide. The working area of the stage is about 29' by 62'. Stairs along the north wall of the stage lead downstairs to mechanical rooms and theater production rooms. The production rooms consist of thirteen dressing rooms, including an orchestra room, organist room, and chorus rooms. The mechanical rooms consist of the electric control room, organ blower room, fan room, boiler room, air-conditioning room, and other mechanical support rooms.

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The Paramount Theater building is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C as a significant example of a 1920s movie palace in the Spanish-style combined with retail and office space. The building was designed by noted Indiana architect Alvin M. Strauss. It is likely that famed atmospheric theater architect John Eberson designed the theater portion of the building. The Paramount is significant as an atmospheric theater that provided patrons with a revolutionary total entertainment experience. The Paramount not only showed movies, but captured audiences with its elaborate decor, luxurious appointments, and striking atmospheric special effects. The Paramount represents the emergence of movies as a cultural and social event and as a well established form of entertainment in the 1920s.

Opened in 1929, the Paramount Theater building is a movie palace combined with retail and office space, a type of building complex popular between 1925 and 1930. The Paramount Theater building can best be characterized as having a Mediterranean flavor that sets it apart from the other commercial buildings along Meridian Plaza. The Spanish Eclectic style, reflected in the building's exterior and the theater interior, became popular after the Panama-California Exposition of 1915 in San Diego. Previous to the Exposition, the architecture of southern California was strongly influenced by a revival of Spanish Colonial and Mission building styles. After the Exposition, designed by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, architects began to look directly to Spain for architectural sources. Spain's history was rich with examples of Moorish, Byzantine, Gothic and Renaissance architecture. That the style reached its apex during the 1920s and 1930s is due in part to the overseas experiences of American soldiers during World War One. They brought home a taste for the foreign and exotic that was catered to by the film industry. The Spanish Eclectic style became a natural choice for the design of movie palaces because Americans began to associate the exotic world of motion pictures and movie stars with the architecture of Hollywood and southern California.

Spanish Colonial and other Spanish Revival styles were not common in Anderson. The downtown commercial district has only two other examples of Spanish-influenced architecture. The Central Christian Church was built in 1899 in the Spanish Baroque style. It is an outstanding example of earlier Spanish Revival

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ecclesiastical architecture. Anderson's other example of Spanish architecture, The State Theater, is similar in style and function to the Paramount building, yet it does not have the Paramount's level of significance and integrity. The State Theater building is located two blocks south of the Paramount on Meridian Street. The State is a smaller theater, lacking the retail and office space of the Paramount. It also lacks the level of ornamentation of the interior spaces, along with the atmospheric qualities, which make the Paramount significant. The State Theater's exterior is similar to the Paramount's using brick and some architectural terra cotta, yet it does not match the abundance and refinement of the terra cotta on the Paramount Theater building. The State Theater building does not retain a level of integrity equal to the Paramount Theater. The Paramount retains a relatively high level of integrity, particularly for its remarkably intact theater interior.

Alvin M. Strauss, the chief architect for the Paramount Theater Building, was a native of Kendallville, Indiana. He was born April 8, 1895, to German parents and was trained in Chicago. After his training, Strauss returned to Indiana and reportedly worked for the firms of John F. Wing and Charles S. Weatherhogg. Between 1916 and 1918 he established his own office in Fort Wayne, Indiana. His early works consisted of homes, churches, small banks, and commercial buildings throughout the state.

In the 1920s, Strauss designed several movie palaces throughout northern Indiana and northwest Ohio. In addition to the Paramount in Anderson, his theaters were built in Auburn, Elwood, and four were built in Fort Wayne. He also designed four theaters in Chicago and theaters in Ohio. Most notable in resemblance to the Paramount in Anderson is the 1927 Embassy Theater and Hotel Building in Fort Wayne, formerly called The Emboyd (NRHP, 9-5-75).

Alvin M. Strauss and his associates created many of Indiana's finest architectural treasures. Some of these, in addition to the Anderson Paramount, include the Lincoln Tower, the Indiana Hotel, the Embassy Theater, the Auburn Automobile Company Administration Building (NRHP, 9-21-78), and 13 buildings on the Indiana University Campus in Bloomington. Strauss died in 1958, but his firm continued until 1989.

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John Eberson was likely the architect responsible for the theater portion of the Paramount Building. Eberson was the creator of the unique atmospheric theater concept, a theater style which rose to prominence during the 1920s. Eberson designed approximately 150 atmospheric theaters during the 1920s. The Paramount is one of approximately 12 Eberson-designed atmospheric's to survive.

Eberson was born in 1875 in Austria and emigrated to the United States, after his training in Dresden and Vienna. He joined the Johnston Theatrical firm in Chicago and by 1905 he was familiar with the details of theater building. He later ventured out on his own, developing the atmospheric theater concept as a fantasy world of exoticism and escapism. His atmospheric theaters were most popular in the 1920s. Eberson designed movie palaces such as the Majestic in Houston, the Paradise and Avalon in Chicago, Lowe's Paradise in the Bronx, the Riveria in Omaha, the Paramount in Nashville, the Riviera in Detroit, as well as many smaller atmospheric just as eclectically astounding. The Great Depression made smaller neighborhood theaters more profitable and atmospheric theaters fell from popularity. Eberson continued to design theaters until his death in 1954.

Although A. M. Strauss was the recorded architect, several sources and the building itself indicate that John Eberson was a consultant and designer of the Paramount. Several Anderson Herald newspaper articles cite Eberson as a contributing architect in the theater's design and construction. Although no two Eberson theaters are the same, a comparative look at some of his other theaters reveals that the Paramount exhibits many of his trademarks. The Paramount's trellis, inlaid lobby tiles, statuary, and exterior facade remarkably resemble Eberson's other theaters. The auditorium interior ornamentation has several motifs in common with other Eberson theaters. It is likely that Eberson drew some of the blueprint designs, then sold rights to the plans to the National Publix Theater Corporation. Publix leased construction on the Paramount and presumably contracted out the plans to Strauss for the final design.

As an atmospheric movie palace, the Paramount Theater is significant in entertainment and recreational history. The theater, unlike today's suburban box theaters, was part of the show. Audiences came not only to enjoy the latest comedies and

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epics from Hollywood, but to experience the lush interior and breathtaking special effects of the atmospheric theater. As Anderson's only and one of Indiana's few atmospheric theaters, the Paramount was among the small number of theaters that could truly propel its audiences to another place and time.

The theater was also designed to encourage social interaction among the members of the audience. It represents the development in the 1920s of theater attendance as a cultural and social event. Theater areas like the lobby, the orchestra foyer, and the mezzanine promenade were designed to "pool" crowds. The orchestra foyer and the mezzanine promenade in particular, with elaborate ornamentation and rich detail, were intended to encourage social interaction. The building design reflects that, by the 1920s, movie theaters were firmly established as destinations for entertainment and escape from the realities of everyday life.

The Paramount Theater opened August 20, 1929, with the Four Marx Brothers in the musical comedy "The Cocoanuts" as the feature. The Anderson Herald of that day published a special "Paramount Section", reflecting the importance of the new theater to the community.

The Paramount was a display of the town's wealth and represented the luxuries of life so many longed to experience. The theater was forced to cease operations for a time during 1930 and 1931 due to the Great Depression, but it reopened and was in nearly continuous operation until 1969. In the 1930s, the Paramount was also the community's center for live entertainment. Louis Armstrong and his orchestra, the Mills Brothers, the Harmonica Rascals, and ventriloquist Max Terhune were but a few who brought live entertainment to Anderson.

From 1969 to 1989 the Paramount passed through a succession of several different owners and by May, 1989, it was threatened by demolition. At that time a group of community leaders formed The Paramount Heritage Foundation, Inc. The foundation obtained ownership of the building and today is working to preserve the Paramount as a community cultural center.

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- Sexton, Randolph W., and B.F. Betts, American Theaters of Today, Architectural Book Publishing Company, Inc., New York, 1927.
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Walker, L. Ann, Nancy Turner, Alison Oswald, and Cindi Gonzales, A Study of the Paramount Theater Building, Anderson, Indiana, College of Architecture and Planning, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana, April 1, 1990.

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ALSO parts of Lots Numbered 17 and 18 in Fletcher and Williams First Addition to the South Front of the City of Anderson, more particularly described as follows: Commencing at the northwest corner of Lot Numbered 17, then running South along the West line of said Lot 17, 144 feet to the Southwest corner of said Lot 17; thence East along the South line of said Lot 17, 48 feet to a point; thence North parallel to the East line of Lot 17, 72 feet to a point; thence East parallel to the South lines of Lots 17 and 18, 96 feet to a point in the East line of Lot 18; thence North along the East line of Lot 18, 72 feet to the Northeast corner of Lot 18; thence West along the North line of Lots 18 and 17, 144 feet to the Northwest corner of Lot 17 and the place of beginning.

EXCEPT, that part deeded to Wallace E. Smith and Janet G. Smith as shown in Deed Record 643, Page 329 recorded November 9, 1987, in the Office of the Recorder of Madison County, Indiana, described as follows: Beginning at a point on the north line of Lot 18 in Fletcher and Williams First Addition to the South Front of the City of Anderson, Indiana, said Point being 44.6 feet West of the Northeast corner of said Lot 18; and running thence South on a line parallel with the East line of said Lot 18 a distance of 24.85 feet; thence West on a line parallel with the North line of said Lot 18 a distance of 0.7 feet; thence South on a line parallel with the East line of said Lot 18 a distance of 47.15 feet; thence West 26.65 feet to a point on the West line of said Lot 18, said point being 72 feet North of the Southwest corner of said Lot 18; thence North along the West line of said Lot 18 a distance of 72 feet to a point marking the Northwest corner of said Lot 18; thence East along the North line of said Lot 18 a distance of 27.56 feet to the place of beginning.